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ABSTRACT

Rather than defining and debating particular goals, educational policymakers tend to focus on the technical issues surrounding educational practice. This book considers the social and ethical orientations that structure mainstream policy dialogues and the way in which adoption of some alternative social and ethical principles would change the form and focus of political debates. Chapters 2 through 4 describe four political and ethical approaches toward policymaking, policy analysis, and policy implementation: the utilitarian, the rights-based, the communitarian, and the humanist. These perspectives are used to examine the connections between educational and societal goals. The fifth and sixth chapters examine two contemporary policy issues, tracking and school choice, through the lens of each framework. A conclusion is that mainstream dialogue is shaped primarily by a utilitarian and rights focus on human capital development. Chapter 7 discusses the longitudinal research conducted in the 1930s and early 1940s by the Progressive Education Association's Commission on the Relation of School and College, the Eight-Year Study of 30 schools pursuing democratic communitarian and humanistic goals. The final chapter argues that two alternative frameworks--democratic communitarianism and humanistic psychology--can provide a wider and perhaps more desirable vision of the purpose of education. An index is included and an appendix summarizes the four perspectives. (Contains 239 references.) (LMI)

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